136 "meset", small white termite which eats wood.

Flying beetles: "enzezza" (onomatopoetic) resembled big bee, eats holes into wooden beams of houses, does not live in colonies. It makes honey which is despised as "wild" by the Amhara, but zar spirits are believed fond of it, especially in the bush. A greenish variety, "tenzizza", the cockchafer, makes no honey, and is eaten by chickens.

[776 237]

Scorpion ("gint"), though mainly a lowland animal, is found also in river valleys on the plateau. It is considered very poisonous especially to cows who swallow it while grazing and are said to die from it. Brown, finger-length, it hides under rocks. Its sting must be "pulled from the wound", in Amhara practice.

[752]

Wild rodents abound in rural areas, and rats which harbor fleas are common along trade routes. They are also a danger to crops, and one of the reasons why threshed grain is stored in the living-hut, in huge, mud-hardened grain bins.

[241 251]

13 The ecological provinces of Ethiopia can be summarized as follows:

(1) Alpine, high-plateau type.

(2) Forests rich in fauna, and mountain savanna.

(3) Desert or near-desert savanna in lowlands, with belts of tropical forest along the rivers.

231 556 Domestication of animals, as mentioned before, is very old in Ethiopia. To this day, the wealth even of long-settled Amhara peasants is judged according to the number of

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

231 livestock he own, and he prefers to keep it or dole it out
[556] to his children on their marriages, rather than sell it. Practically everyone has a few sheep and goats, possibly also a donkey and a horse, and, if richer, a mule, some cows and a team of two oxen.

The cattle population of Ethiopia is estimated at 18 million, or 1.2 head per person, comparable with New Zealand and Argentina.[11] However, an estimated million or more cattle die each year of rinderpest, anthrax, tick fever, etc. This limits the exportation of meat surplus almost as much as does difficulty of transportation to world markets.

412 According to the United Nations estimate, Ethiopia in
411 1950-1951 had 1 million horses, 1 million mules, 3 million donkeys. These provide the bulk of transportation, except for the few hundred heavy trucks (trente-quatros) which
411 operate on the few Italian-built roads. This modern road network has been badly damaged by the annual rains, by the overloading of trucks, and by inadequate (though improving) repairs.

241 The estimated agricultural production of Ethiopia in
1954 included:

Maize - 150,000 metric tons,
Barley - 600,000 metric tons,
Linseed - 50,000 metric tons,
Coffee - 45,800 metric tons, [12]

11. RuD, 1955, 4pp.
12. U. N. Secretariat, Statistical Office: Statistical Yearbook 1955, tables 29, 14, 15, 20, 25.

232 these cattle are resistant to diseases that killed off European cattle brought to Ethiopia by Point IV. This immunity includes poisonous grasses as well as ticks. They are resistant to changes in temperature between day and night, thrive on natural fodder of little nutritive quality, and even old cows continue to have calves for a considerable period.

233 Several factors characterize the Amhara attitude as agricultural rather than pastoral, in addition to the emphasis on the hump and the geldin-for-strength instead of for breeding. Herding is not considered a suitable occupation for a grown Amhara adult; there is no cowboy pattern at all, and cattle herding is usually assigned to boys under 12 years of age while sheep-and-goatherding is often assigned to a dimwitted simpleton. The corral is not of strong stakes, but of light, loose thornbushes.

231 On the other hand, cattle, especially cows, play an
● 556 important role in social organization and other human relations among the Amhara. The terms for cattle and for wealth are synonymous. In marriage agreements, the kinfolk on both the bride's and the groom's side promise to contribute an equal number of cows. This means that the child of a poor farmer cannot hope to marry the offspring of a wealthy farmer, under the usual circumstances, unless the rich partner restricts his contribution to what the poor can afford, or unless the poorer manages to borrow enough cattle from a wider range of kinfolk.

To overcome boundaries of social stratification, cattle enables a peasant to present an "entrance gift"

231
[556] ("agäbba") to an important "great man", perhaps to become a "client" in his retinue for protection.

[77] In religious life, the old peasant can arrange for the peace of his soul after death by giving a cow to his Confessor or to the "qēs gabaz" the administrative priest [682] of the parish church, to have masses recited. In criminal law, a murderer in the remote rural areas can still save himself and even prevent a long and bloody feud between families, if he can borrow enough cattle, in addition to his own, to pay "blood-money", in cows, to the kin of the victim, the agreement witnessed by the presence of a "chega shum", a judge, or a priest, preferably all three. Thus there are some aspects of the cattle pattern that are reminiscent of a tribal, semi-nomadic, rather than settled territorial social organization. This becomes emphasized during the upland trek in the rainy season.

233 Though entrusted to youngsters, care of cattle is obviously a task requiring responsibility. Cattle is not taken out until one hour after sunrise, about 7 A.M., when the dew has dried. During the hot dry season, cattle rest under umbrella trees and other shade from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M., so that the grazing period away from the hamlet is not long. Before dusk, by 6 P.M., they are taken into the hamlet enclosure or corrall, or even into the hut, for hyenas may come early.

The cash value of cattle is low, primarily because of the distance and poor transportation to world markets. [281] The hides, a major export item, are of low cash value because this type is not tanned, merely sundried, and "book-folded" for export.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

575 561 mahabbar is first founded, the usual pattern of an age group is generally followed, so that young-marrieds, middle-aged, and elders have their own. But since there is great prestige in being admitted to a mahabbar of older persons, partly because of the honor of associating with respected elders, partly for direct economic advantages of belonging to an old, well-endowed mahabbar, boundaries of age do not last long. Elders, on their part, desire to replace vacancies left by deceased members with younger persons, whom they can dominate.

575 [566] Some persons belong to more than one mahabbar, but generally only the relatively well-to-do freehold landowners and traders can afford the expense. It is possible to transfer to another mahabbar, but it is usually not in a person's interest to sever established relationships; human, economic and legal. In case of any difficulty, he has ready bondsman to act as "wäs" (guarantors). Most of all, the rare opportunity to express individual preference in a formal "we-group" creates personal, psychological ties that the average Amhara does not like to forego.

One of the most noteworthy and socially significant aspects of the mahabbär association is the wide variety of functions for which it can be adapted, despite--or perhaps because of--its simple structure. This is in almost complete contradistinction to most other Amhara patterns, which usually evidence a complex hierarchical structure and very specifically regulated functions. In comparison, the mahabbar is little structured.

557 household both in rural areas or towns, also to do
565 plowing for the freehold farmer and help in the harvest. Servants are usually permanently employed, and therefore do not usually leave even if the employer is behind in his monthly wage payments. Salary and food are received with a bow and cupped hands. The servant addresses the master with the extra polite "gētoch" (lit. masters, i.e. plural), walks in front of the master's mule to make way, slightly behind him when both are on foot, and never lets his master carry anything.

Long interpersonal relations usually improve the position of the servant to master, and it is not in the servant's interest to change jobs, or to go to another area where he is unknown. A landless "gabbar" may try to attach himself to a well-to-do household as "retainer ("zēga"), without wages, doing a servant's work in the hope of occasional, seasonal gifts, a share of the produce, or, in town, a share in trade. For, a servant or retainer who is Amhara "attentam" and Coptic Christian becomes like a member of the extended family. The proverb says:

[539] "When (women) grind (grain) together,
there is no mistress".

556 Economic wealth enables each of these social
565 classes to achieve some upward social nobility, within limits. But there are not many opportunities to accumulate much wealth. Traders can raise their status
[44] in towns, despite doubful ancestry. The same is true
294 of tailors, a very recent occupation in town, where
565 foot-operated Singer sewing machines have enabled men

294 to set up shops along the main street leading to the
585 market, or at the market itself, manufacturing khaki shorts and jackets. But this is still considered shameful manuel labor by the Amhara, so that he will pursue it only in another province where it does not shame his kinfolk.

•556 A rich man, whose low ancestry may be whispered behind his back, is nevertheless usually treated with honor by Amhara commoners. The proverb says:

[539] "He who falls in a shallow place"
hurt will not come to him", (i.e. a rich man, even if he falls drunk in a gutter, will not be molested by ruffians, who will instead take him to his house, expecting a reward).

[539] "The water of (the rainy month) Mähasse is good,
yet no one will drink it;
the word of the poor man may be fruitful,
but no one will listen to him" (i.e.he is not appreciated, no matter how wise).

B. Age Stratification.

561 Age stratification among the Amhara ranks in emphasis between class stratification andsex stratification.

561 The social relation of old toward the young is
882 often likened by the Amhara to that of master to servant. Indeed, a young man between puberty and marriage is addressed as "ashkär", (lit. servant). A young girl of the same age is addressed and even referred to as "leǧ ǎrèd"(lit. servant maid, handmaiden).

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

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some fancied item without payment, as a sort of silent commission.

Some zar doctors are very exacting with their regular patient-devotees, and therefore, by local standards, are quite rich. They invest in real estate such as semi-modern shacks of the "street of single girls". Many female zar doctors and some of the clever devotees own the profitable mead houses ("tāj bēt") described before. On the other hand, a great zar doctor is expected to show generosity and distribute part of the income to followers and assistant zar doctors, just as feudal Amhara chiefs distribute loot to their retainers, and as great zar spirits offer commensal rights to the little zars.

Because of the greed of the zar spirits, a kind of evil eye in itself, many "possess" hide their property from the zar doctor as well as the zar spirits. It is believed that their demands are never satisfied, that the more they are given the more they want, in "mäqwädäsha" (lit. that which makes to love) gifts. Some zar spirits possessing a poor person are regarded as always on the lookout for "contagion" with a rich person, for, by putting a "touch" on him they can change "residence". Zar doctors competing with each other sometimes lure a zar away from another doctor on purpose, so that they can advertise, through the grapevine of the possessed, that a great protective zar has changed residence, thus increasing the fame and income of the ambitious zar doctor. It is well known that in times of scarcity there are few new "possessions" by the zar, while in times of abundance there are many.

A poor person, who is struck, usually by a low-status "poor man's zar", and approaches a zar doctor for treatment of his ailment, is treated but must work off the "gifts" in service, through labor. A poor man will act as a servant, run errands, weave reed baskets, etc.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

X794 A poor woman will perform work such as serving coffee, sweeping,
756 fetching water and fuel, cooking, baking, brewing beer, and spinning
556 cotton thread in the house of the zar doctor.

X794 The contract arranged by the zar doctor with the zar spirit for
675 each patient devotee is regarded as having legal validity. In exchange
776 for regular gifts and services the zar spirit promises limited reposse-
session, at regular intervals only, and self-restraint in contagion of other members of the family of the patient at least until after her death. After that event the zar spirit may pass on to the next generation to assure himself continuation of the proferred gifts.

X794 Complications are explained away on the grounds that there has been
776 some trifling oversight in payment of dues or in respect; or on the grounds that another, evil, zar has "stolen" the dues in order to make trouble. The zar doctor never admits to error; instead, he restores the contract by instructing the possessed to dance the "gurri" of atonement ("yäbater gurri") (lit. of the stick) if guilty; or the "yämehrat gurri", dance of mercy and acquittal, in case of slight
[691] oversight. Some zars are as fond of litigation as most Amhara. One zar spirit is nicknamed "wäs aggach" because he always requires a personal guarantor, "wäs", whom he will "possess" in place of the patient in case of default in payments.

X794 Even the judicial authorities, the provincial judges among the
694 Amhara, will occasionally recognize zar possession as a valid excuse for violations of the law, or at least as a mitigating circumstance. Failure to appear in court to answer a summons may be forgiven on the grounds of "agorra" (lit. he roared, shrieked, i.e. is under possession) that particular day. The only other equally strong excuse would be that the person summoned had just taken kosso purgative.

795 Some dabtära have grown wealthy through mass-production of
756 amulets, in which they leave the name of the client free, to be
556 filled in on the market when sold. But this "waters down" his reputation.

b. The cosmology of demons treated by amulets

789 The amulets written by the dabtara are worn, usually on the "matab" neckcord, or around the waist especially of women. They are not read. To be effective they must bear the inscribed name of the wearer, though it is possible to have a dabtara erase the name and substitute another. Usually the amulet is written on varying qualities of parchment (from very thick to very fine), rolled tightly into a small leather case. The ink used is usually [386] made of soot, charcoal, iron powder and gallus. To emphasize an important name or matter, imported red ink is used.

Amulets also may contain drawn pictures, symbols and geometric design, some of a type that has been called "cabalistic". A fre- [716] quent picture is the scene depicting the killing of the female demon of miscarriage, "Werzelya", by Saint Susneos, seated on a horse using a lance (much like European scenes of St. George killing the dragon). This demon is sometimes depicted as a female [567] of the negroid (Barya) tribe, from which the Amhara used to capture slaves. The legend that accompanies this scene is as follows:

773 A Christian martyr, named Susneyos, had married and his child
789 had been killed by the female demon Werzelya. Thereupon he prayed to Jesus and received special power to slay the murderess. St. Susneyos mounted his horse, took his spear and rode away to the desert (evidently the Nilotic lowland below the northwestern escarpment), where the demon was hiding with others of her kind.

3: Buxton Y-5 (1946-1948)1949 MP5 Amhara MP5

These figures show that the gorges, together with the adjoining and intervening plateau, carry a considerably higher population than the rest of the plateau, the combined average being over 200 per square mile. The figures for population per church are also interesting. The gorges and the adjacent parts of the plateau contain no fewer than thirteen churches and they serve an average population of only some 650 souls each. On the other hand the churches of the general plateau, not counting those of Debra Berhan, which chiefly serve the townspeople, number only four. They must cater for about three times as many people each, and until recently many more for two of them are recent foundations.

The higher population of the gorge region is attributable to two causes: the greater productivity of the land there, and the historical fact, already referred to, that the Amharas were long forced to live in the gorges, and have re-emerged only in recent times. This is confirmed by the evidence of the churches which, in such numbers, are sure evidence of a long-established Christian population. The oldest ones are among those in the depths of the gorges; sites on the edges of gorges seem to be more recent. The few plateau churches are all relatively modern and bespeak the re-occupation by Amharas; two of them were indeed founded within the last fifteen years, and one as recently as 1945.

As can be seen from the map, sites chosen for dwellings are usually on the higher ground. The favourite sites, of which many examples can be seen on the sheet, are rocky ridges and the tops or upper slopes of hills and minor plateaus. A high place with an outlook, together with reasonable proximity to permanent water, seem to be the conditions sought after. Even the most elevated and exposed hill-tops are generally inhabited, whereas nobody tries to live on the plains near the main streams, which become very swampy in the rains. The ordinary family, together with its domestic animals, lives in a small, irregular cluster of round huts, which in this area are built of stone cemented with mud and carry a conical thatched roof. They are surrounded, as a rule, by a dry-stone wall, which may be shared by several households. Richer people may have an ornamental gatehouse at the main entry, with a little watchman's room over the gate; but such ostentation was not common.

Disregarding some of the Debra Berhan people, almost the entire population is engaged in farming which, here as elsewhere in Ethiopia, is the mainstay of existence. Some possess their own land; others hold their plots, in return for a proportion of the produce (but without any security of tenure), from absentee landowners. There is also a landless element, greatly increased through the disturbing influence of the Italian occupation, who hire themselves out as ploughmen and labourers. I had intended to measure some typical holdings in order to estimate the area actually required to support a family, but my time in the area was cut short and I never did so. As a very rough estimate I think that about 15–20 per cent. of the area is under cultivation in any one year, which would indicate an average per family of something like 4 acres. This does not include fallow land which, once re-grown with grass, cannot be distinguished at a glance from permanent pasture.

The most exposed parts of the plateau near Debra Berhan will grow two crops only, barley and broad beans, but a limited amount of wheat (a bearded

7: Perham S-4 (no date)1948
MP5 Amhara MP5

423 here there is no Domesday Book to give a clear point of departure and none of the successive unravellings of generations of scholars to help the inquirer. Any attempt at the simplification of the evidence must to some extent be a distortion.

Two preliminary generalizations may help to clarify the picture.

● [556] Firstly it is important to remember that in Ethiopia, as in all economically backward countries where industry is negligible, almost all material wealth was the direct produce of the herdsman or the man who worked on the land with his plough and his hoe.

423 Ethiopia shared with the rest of tropical Africa a primitive peasant
466 agriculture; the difference was that there stood upon this basis a large
651 hierarchical structure of government. This meant that the cultivator
241 must, as the Ethiopians themselves express it, 'carry upon his shoulders' all that very large proportion of the population which had withdrawn themselves from work on the land. This included the Emperor; all his officials, central and provincial, great and small; the vast hierarchy of the church and the large armies of soldiers. As a result of the undeveloped economy and communications of Ethiopia, the services of the agriculturalist had for the most part to be used directly by the contribution of part of the crops or cattle from his own land or by the use of his labour upon that of another. While slave labour was widely used for domestic purposes, especially in the houses of the rich, it was not in the north used very extensively in the fields, and the main support of Ethiopian state and society was not the slave but the theoretically free cultivator, the *gabar*. The elaborate systems of land tenure and of tribute with all their provincial variations represent only the different means by which his services and produce were utilized by the government and by other classes. It was not the land but the labour of the *gabars* on the land which provided the support for provincial as well as imperial administration. Hence the importance of the forms of tenure and tribute.

423 The word *gabar* has been used as a term of reproach against Ethiopia.
466 At the end of these chapters on the provinces the reader will be in a
651 better position to judge how far this charge was just, and especially how far it accumulated evil association by the forms it assumed in the conquered south. Here the position of the northern *gabar* must be defined in its simplest terms. In theory and, at its best, in practice, the status was not synonymous with slavery or even with oppression. Literally it means one who pays *gibr* or tribute. 'There is no shame in the word "gabbar"' was the general Ethiopian opinion recorded by an observant British consul.[1] As tribute was in theory based upon land

[1] Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

[MANZ]

29 / *The Legacy of Manz and Gondar*

The history and customs of Manz are more obviously related to its geography than is the case with Gondar. The encircling wall of mountains has been a source of isolation and protection, two factors of great moment in the history of the area. Peculiar eating and clothing habits have developed in response to a climate which, owing to the altitude of Manz and its position at the edge of an escarpment that leads down to a desert of the Rift Valley, is one of the coldest in Ethiopia. The temperature often approaches the freezing point, and in the colder months (October and November) standing in the sunshine at high noon is no defense against a shrill wind that pierces the bones.

Barley is the only crop that thrives in the highest parts of Manz, though wheat, beans, peas, and chick-peas grow in the slightly lower altitudes. But *tĕff*, the grain preferred by Abyssinians for the preparation of their staple food —a kind of pancake known as *ĭnjarā*—cannot be cultivated at those heights, so the Manzē typically eats *ĭnjarā* made of barley.

Sheep are a major item in the Manz economy. The average farm has a herd of 100 to 150 sheep, which provide a heavy wool as well as the Manzē's favorite meat. This wool is used to make the *bānnā*, a warm blanket which is wrapped around the body and constitutes the standard dress of the Manzē. The *bānnā* distinguishes him from other Abyssinians, who wear a white cotton toga called *shammā*. Wealthier men wear the *barnos*, a tailored cape made of dark wool. Manzē wool is also used for the weaving of rugs which ornament the homes of the well-to-do.

No dyes are used in working their wool, so a crowd of Manzēs in natural-colored *bānnā* seen at a distance resembles a flock of their sheep. This is one of the touches contributing to the impressive aesthetic unity of the Manz landscape. The effect is also produced by the fact that the Manzē's house is built of stone, the same stone that is seen everywhere on the terrain; and its conical roof is made of thatch, which makes the roof look like the piles of grain in the fields. The churches are also built of stone with thatched conical roofs. Everything one sees in Manz bespeaks a harmony with the natural environment.

The cold climate of Manz is invigorating. It prevents food from spoiling quickly and discourages diseases which flourish in lower altitudes. The Manzē boasts that his climate keeps people healthy and gives them long lives, and indeed it is not uncommon to find men sprightly in their eighties and nineties. But only the hardy survive, for life there is as rugged as the land, and the people—like their landscape—are stony, bleak, and full of dark recesses.

Manz does not occupy so conspicuous a place in Ethiopian history as Gondar. Indeed, most books on Ethiopia do not even mention the area. While

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

other hand, has hitherto been impeded by two characteristics of humanistic and social studies. The historian's view has been limited by his reliance on written records that deal chiefly with the activities of men of power and the conceptions of literati. The ethnographer or traveler who tries to give the peasantry its due has usually concentrated on the more evident and accessible facts of custom—activities related to work, play, kinship, and ritual. The peasant's inner feelings and notions have perforce been neglected.[2]

In default of a widely disseminated sensibility to peasant realities, modernizing Ethiopians have thus come to view the peasantry in terms of misleading stereotypes: either romantically, as an embodiment of virtue, awaiting only proper leadership to realize their suppressed aspirations for freedom, justice, and progress; or else as inhabitants of a dark hinterland, barbarous in custom and blind with superstition. In this chapter we shall attempt a more empirical account of one part of the Ethiopian peasant's world—that of the Amhara—with particular emphasis on the beliefs and values of the peasant himself. Our account is based on seven months of residence among the Amhara peasantry, using the observational techniques of participant observation, discreet questioning, analysis of folk expressions, and Thematic Apperception Tests (TAT).[3]

THE INSTITUTIONAL SETTING OF PEASANT LIFE

The homestead is the basic ecological and social unit of the Amhara peasantry. The average homestead consists of from one to six small round structures, built of wattle (or stone, as in Manz) and capped with conical thatched roofs. A well-equipped homestead will have one building for eating and sleeping, one for animals, one for grain storage, one as a kitchen, and one for entertaining guests; though for many peasants all these functions are served by a single large building. The homestead is normally located on land worked by the peasant. While most peasants plow land whose use is theirs by hereditary right (*rïst*), some are tenants on estates owned by the king, lords, monasteries, or older relatives.

The smallest homesteads consist simply of husband, wife, and unmarried children. Sometimes a young married son will remain within the family home and, much less frequently, a young married daughter. Occasionally an older relative will be sustained there, or a younger relative will be brought up there. One or more servants—slaves, until a generation ago—complete the household. The wealthier the peasant, the more relatives and servants will be found in the homestead.

At times hamlets will be formed by the clustering of households of a number of married brothers or other kin. These tend to have a patriarchal cast; if the father is no longer living, the oldest male relative usually assumes jurisdiction for the affairs of the hamlet. But the nucleated village, contrary to erroneous

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

The instruction of girls in noble families was not so different from that of peasant girls, though they were spared some of the menial drudgery. The *çhawā* girl would be taught all the household arts, but it was understood that she would be provided with numerous slaves to do the work after marriage. Her own adult chores would be limited to the preparation of *ṭaj*, the beverage of the nobility, and special dishes for her husband; while the preparation of *ṭallā* and food for guests would be the work of domestics.

The style of life of the nobility is colored above all by a seemingly unlimited command of deference. They are addressed as "my lord" by all comers, and waited on in a hundred ways wherever they go. Every "big man" is attended by a flock of servants and retainers, who accompany him on trips and spare him the slightest exertion. This is so elemental a feature of Amhara culture that big men are commonly referred to with the associative prefix *enna-*; for example, *enna-Dajāzmātch Hailu*, meaning "Dajāzmātch Hailu and his men."

The social space of a nobleman is crowded with the issuing of commands. When he visits the home of another, he orders the servants and young people there just as imperiously as if he were in his own home. The wives of the nobility develop much the same manner, though from a more passive position. They spend a good deal of their time sitting on their beds and issuing orders. This sort of indolent, vegetative existence has produced the obese figure and morose countenance for which some Abyssinian ladies have been noted. On the other hand, from her particular vantage point the noble lady has often played an influential and enlightened part in court and regional politics.

Conspicuous consumption among the *makuānnent* thus takes the form of a surfeit of servants. The household of a nobleman of modest rank might boast, in addition to numerous maidservants who procure and prepare food and drink for the establishment, as many as ten to fifteen male servants. Plowden has left us a description of some of their functions:

> One carries your shield, and whenever you go out he saddles your mule and accompanies you, and in the house he makes himself generally useful about your person; another makes your mead, arranges it, and is also perhaps a gunner, and supplies you with game; another is doorkeeper and order-keeper generally. One or two, older and wiser, are counsellors, and their knowledge of the country, and of customs and tricks, is of the greatest service; another has charge of the corn, watching that the maidservants do not steal, and arranging the allowance of all the rest; others are grass-cutters only, according to the number of your beasts; another is a wood-cutter for firewood, very necessary in a country where they have no coal, and the wilderness is free to all.[21]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

565 63 66 taxes collected in the name of the emperor. Concerning the imposts for which the peasants were liable, Plowden wrote in 1844:

[651] They pay a certain portion in kind to the Ras, or other great chief, and sometimes a regular tax in money; besides this, they must furnish oxen to plough the king's lands. Their immediate governor then takes his share in kind of every grain (say a fifth), and feeds besides a certain number of soldiers at the expense of each householder: he has rights to oxen, sheep, goats, butter, honey, and every other requisite for subsistence; he must be received with joy and feasting by his subjects whenever he visits them, and can demand from them contributions on fifty pretexts—he is going on a campaign, or has just returned from one; he has lost a horse, or married a wife; his property has been consumed by fire, or he has lost his all in battle; or the sacred duty of a funeral banquet cannot be fulfilled without their aid.[30]

Two centuries earlier, observing similar phenomena, Almeida had concluded that "generally speaking, they are all plunderers rather than governors."[31] The only restraints on their exploitative behavior have been an occasionally keen sense of Christian propriety and the limits to what an exasperated local populace will bear.

565 The existence of a predatory class who serve military functions and maintain a gentry subculture is a common enough feature of traditional agrarian societies. What is perhaps less common in the Abyssinian case is the constellation of factors relating to the recruitment of members into this elite.

High secular status in Abyssinia was dependent on a complex of possessions—land, political strength, and honorific titles—which tended to reinforce [423] one another. The possession of much land has always been a basis for considerable deference in Abyssinia. As a source of produce, rents, and revenues [556] deflected from the Crown, moreover, it was also a source of wealth to be used [662] in building up one's political strength by rewarding able soldiers and loyal [661] followers, and by making gifts to one's superiors. Political power was directly obtained through the acquisition of governorships. Such offices were a further [631] basis for much deference and, through the incumbent's access to tribute, customs fees, court fees, and gifts from his subjects, of much income as well. [554] Titles, finally, not only were universally esteemed but also entitled the bearers to a style of life which included a presumptive right to gifts and obedience from all inferiors as well as the consumption of much wealth and power.

565 643 For all these possessions, the Abyssinian noble was directly dependent on his king (or, in the case of a lesser noble, on his overlord). His dependence was twofold: land, political office, and titles came to him as gifts from the sovereign, and, what is more, their continued possession was contingent on [423] the sovereign's continuing favor. Abyssinian "vassals" had no legal rights to their "benefices," and lands granted them could be withdrawn and given to others as the emperor wished. At the death of a feudal beneficiary his lands

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

178 565 661 So long as they remain loyal, the Emperor has tended to let members of the new nobility help themselves to the spoils of office. Some of them retain the view that public office is a private possession, a reward from the emperor rather than an obligation to the nation or people, and that it is, therefore, appropriate to use governmental position primarily to help one's relatives, inflate one's ego, and multiply one's wealth.

178 565 556 [241] [455] For the new nobility, however, wealth is no longer measured primarily in terms of land and cattle, but of money. If they own land, it is of interest chiefly as a source of income, and they tend to prefer using it for cash crops like coffee and *çhat* (a narcotic plant sold in quantities to Arabs) than for the traditional grains and pulse or for experimental crops. They prefer to speculate in real estate rather than to increase the output of their farmlands. Indeed, because of the heightened prestige of money, many officials have been grateful—or would be grateful—for the opportunity to leave government service and become entrepreneurs. They feel very close to that small number of Ethiopians outside the government who have acquired much wealth through commercial enterprise, and who may also be included in the status group of the new nobility.

178 565 556 472 [175] [648] Commercial entrepreneurs came into prominence on the Ethiopian scene in the 1920's, when monopolies in alcohol, matches, salt, and tobacco, as well as trade in coffee and skins, enabled a small number of Ethiopian families, Christian as well as Muslim, to accumulate wealth. Such people became prisoners of their wealth during the occupation, since they felt obliged to collaborate with the Italians in order to protect their privileges. Many more Ethiopians have profited from the modest economic activity in the country since the liberation, although most of Ethiopia's trade remains in the hands of Arabs, Greeks, and Armenians (at least nominally). Their social level approximates that of the higher government officials. They are expected to pay their respects at court along with the *makuännent* and *bäla-seltän*. They [662] are often related to high government officials, and attempt to make use of their relatives in office to help them secure commercial advantages. Above all, they share the same style of life.

178 565 369 177 [556] As an urban group, the new nobility enjoy a style of life notably different from that of their predecessors who lived on mountainous estates and in army tents. Even if assigned to provincial posts, members of the new nobility tend to maintain homes in Addis Ababa. They have been quick to incorporate the more conventional urban Western forms of conspicuous consumption. Automobiles and chauffeurs, expensive European clothes, modern houses, Scotch whiskey, and Western-style banquets and dances have become the common ingredients of their subculture.

178 565 554 At the same time, traditional symbols of prestige are still in evidence. The

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

phenomenon, however, the intellectuals are already unmistakably in evidence, and if one contrasts them as a social stratum with the new nobility their outlines become readily visible.

The new nobility came into being in consequence of Haile Selassie's policy of political *centralization*. The status of its members rests on their possession of political influence, measured partly by the strength of their personal followings but primarily by how close they are to the Emperor, and on the Westernized style of life made possible by wealth acquired through political office, rents, and commerce. Its ascendance as a status group may be located approximately in the decade after 1945, the year in which failure of a revolt in Tigre Province marked the end of attempts to assert provincial claims inspired by allegiance to members of the old nobility. The decade was marked by rapid growth of the factors supportive of centralized government and the new nobility: expansion of the bureaucracy, strengthening of the national military force, and economic advance.*

The intelligentsia, by contrast, has come into being in consequence of Haile Selassie's policy of technical *modernization*. The status of its members rests on their possession of secular Western education, status differences within the group depending on the academic degree attained and the prestige of the school attended. The development of the intelligentsia as a counter-elite has its beginnings in the present decade, beginning around 1955, the year of the jubilee celebration of the twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Emperor's coronation. This was a lavishly contrived affair which, occurring at about the time that the first sizable group of postwar college students had returned from abroad, accentuated in their minds a sense of alienation from the *ancien régime*. The present decade is marked by dramatic increase in the number of Ethiopians with college degrees and secondary school certificates, and in the general prestige of education as such in the country. For, it will be remembered, in the late forties the government found it necessary to pay families to get them to send their children to school; whereas by the late fifties, there were far too many applicants for the available places.

The pattern of recruitment of members of the new nobility has been continuous with important elements of the traditional social system. It rests on the belief in the sanctity of the emperor and the legitimacy of his unlimited political authority, and the practice of emperors sometimes to raise to high position men of low background who were *ipso facto* more trustworthy. The personnel of the new nobility, moreover, have in a number of cases been drawn from members of old noble families.

By contrast, the formation of the intelligentsia represents a break with the

* Due largely to trade in coffee, whose export value climbed more or less steadily from Eth$17 million in 1947 to Eth$123 million in 1957.